

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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TWO TURTLE SPECIES PROPOSED AS ENDANGERED; HABITAT LISTED

The Key mud turtle (Kinosternon bauri bauri) and the Plymouth red-bellied turtle (Chrysemys rubriventris bangsi) have been proposed by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to be endangered species and their critical habitats have been identified.

This notice was published in the May 19, 1978, Federal Register.

This action is being taken because the habitats where these species dwell is subject to intense alteration.

The proposed action, if completed, would protect the populations of the turtles and their habitats.

The Key mud turtle is found on several islands in the Florida Keys in Monroe County, Florida. The Plymouth red-bellied turtle is found in Plymouth and Dukes Counties, Massachusetts.

Comments are invited from the public through July 19, 1978, and should be sent to the Director (OES), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

The Key mud turtle and the red-bellied turtle were part of a review of the status of 12 turtles started in June 1977.

The several islands in the lower Florida Keys where the Key mud turtle is found are rapidly being developed. This development is often accompanied by draining the fresh water wetlands on which the turtle depends. Populations of the Key mud turtle are extremely sensitive to this type of disturbance. Some of the populations may also be disturbed by road widening projects and the drainage of wetlands for mosquito control.

The Plymouth red-bellied turtle lives in an area that is increasingly being developed for housing. A major threat to this species is the modification of ponds and associated wetlands on which it depends. Some areas may also be adversely affected by road widening projects.

All prohibitions of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 would apply to these turtles if listed. These prohibitions would make it illegal for any person subject to the jurisdiction of the United States to take, import or export, ship in interstate commerce in the course of a commercial activity, or sell or offer for sale these species in interstate or foreign commerce. It also would be illegal to possess, sell, deliver, carry, transport, or ship any such wildlife which was illegally taken. Certain exceptions would apply to agents of the Service and State conservation agencies.